

28 AUG 1973

Bob:

Subject: Records Management

Per your request, some thoughts stemming from your meeting of 22 Aug 73 concerning the Records Management issue:

1. How does the notion of trying to manage records arise? Apparently, because records are generated in great volume at great expense, move through their active lives using up large amounts of manpower and space, and finally come to rest in inactive storage which again has major costs associated with it.

2. Records are thoughts in physical form. In a way, the difficulty of controlling the creation and use of records is comparable to trying to control the thoughts of an organization. I know that Records Management doctrine is intended to cover the record from creation through its active life to archival storage or destruction. In practice, however, records management has found its principal effectiveness limited to inactive or archival storage... in spite of the determined efforts of earnest people over the years. Somehow, it has proved very up-hill for Records Management programs to impact significantly on records generation or the active life of records. There must be a reason for this.

3. Records are the molecules of an organization. Intuitively, it's a very forbidding prospect to manage a pervasive aspect of an organization by undertaking to manage the molecules of that organization. It is like trying to manage a building by giving attention to its bricks. Organizations do not enjoy such exquisite degree of control... in records or anything else. Perhaps this explains why Records Management, concentrating as it does on records, has been relatively ineffective in its efforts to "manage" the creation of records and the active life of records.

(What we should manage, it would seem, are the plans, programs, projects, and people in an organization... but not the records as such which are generated by these plans, programs, projects, and people. And managing

the Agency's plans, programs, projects, and people is the function of the supervisory system of the Agency. Efforts at strong management of a pervasive aspect of Agency activity like records from some central body would be in some way in conflict with the Agency's supervisory structure and would appear certain to cause confusion and achieve little good.)

4. Given the thesis that it really isn't feasible to control costs in an organization by attempting to "manage" records as such throughout the Agency (except archival records), it would appear that whatever wisdom or restraint we employ in generating and using records must become an inherent part of the normal work habits of all employees throughout the Agency. This, in turn, would suggest that what is needed from some central body (small staff) in the Agency is a few practical rules which can be followed by all of us in the paper world in which we work... together with widespread training in those rules. Such rules (they must be easily do-able) and compliance with them may achieve the lion's share of all we can hope to achieve in the way of "management" over active records. If so, we should avoid ponderous central mechanisms or a large body of people straining at the full doctrine of records management.

5. The above leads me to these notions:

a. We do not need a large central body of people attempting to "manage" records. (Won't work.)

b. We do not need elaborate and complex mechanisms imposed on the line command aimed at records management. (Cost more than it will achieve.)

c. We do need a few simple, practical rules... (and we need to implant these rules in the daily habits of our people through training)... which will guide each and every one of us towards more desirable practices as regards records creation and usage. (Should work.)

6. Another line of thought: In terms of Agency-level organs, it seems to me we have too many. We have the Records Management Board, the Information Processing Board, the R&D Board, the Contract Review Committee, etc. The same individual often serves on more than one of these bodies.

Last year, I proposed that the IP Board be upgraded in membership to the Assistant Deputy Director level. This was done. Part of my rationale in so doing was to move us towards a body senior enough to establish policy and make many decisions in the Information Processing area and, potentially, in other areas of management concern as well. That is, I felt (and still feel) that a Board at the ADD level could properly and effectively support the DCI and the CIA Management Committee in the planning, policy generation, and decision making required in running the Agency.

Such a Board would need staff support. And it might be that small staffs specializing in such areas as Records Management, Information Processing, R&D, and Contract Review would be needed. However, these staffs should be kept small. Easy coordination among these staffs would also be a requirement--a factor which might argue for organizational co-location of these staffs.

7. My basic point on Agency-level staffs is that we should avoid establishing large central staffs with ambitious charters which inevitably run counter to the lines of authority by which the Agency's day-to-day operations are managed.

8. One last gasp: After the Records Management issue has been thought through a little more, I think we will want to sit down and consider what mix of Agency-level staffs and Boards CIA really needs.

Chuck